

Our SJGSL Executive Board certainly appreciates the time and the attention that you gave to us at Monday's meeting. As we noted, our intention to begin accepting boys teams into our league has come about in response to multiple requests which we have received from various club officials. We had received a few of these types of requests in past years, however it became apparent that the desire of some clubs to move away from the SJSL had become more serious over the last soccer year. For example, we heard from several clubs that they had initiated contact with MOSA in order to determine the feasibility of moving their boys teams to that league. It is also clear that the expense and procedures of EDP are not what the vast majority of South Jersey teams are seeking for their players and their families.

After much discussion among the SJGSL board members, we felt that the most appropriate thing to do for our member clubs was for our league to provide a home for these boys teams. It is our belief that the experience and style of our board, the opportunity to apply identical rules and procedures across both genders and the willingness of our league to explore and investigate new ideas for the enjoyment of our players would be a major benefit to all of the clubs, teams, coaches, players and families involved.

Our board does feel that this expansion would be the next step in our line of expanded opportunities for our players. Over the last few years, that line has included the South Jersey Cup (both boys and girls teams), the reinstatement of the League Select Program (both boys and girls under SJGSL/SJYS) and our newest endeavor – an inter-league series of games with the Northern Counties Soccer Association which has been a big success in its inaugural season. Since the NCSA also has boys teams, there is no reason why we cannot expand this inter-league series to include our new boys teams at the same age groups as our girls teams.

A few comments were raised in regard to whether this single-league could be created by a merger of the two existing leagues rather than by the expansion of the SJGSL. As was noted at the meeting, the two leagues had been moving closer with the possibility of some type of merger in the couple of years prior to June, 2020. Unfortunately, with the change in make-up of the SJSL board, the two leagues moved much further apart and this type of merger is no longer possible. We do not feel that it is appropriate to make public the specific issues/actions/decisions involved in this situation and we will not speak badly of the SJSL leaders.

There were some questions raised at the meeting and requests to fill in some of the specifics of this plan. So, please note the following:

- 1) While we are still evaluating the cost per team, we would like to reassure you that the cost per team will not be more than what is currently paid in SJGSL. Once the new fixed costs are established, we will be happy to revisit this cost structure.
- 2) SJGSL has had a paid League Administrator for a long, long time. Our expanded league will also have the benefit of a paid League Administrator
- 3) It is planned that referee fees will remain the same for at least the next two years.

- 4) Match days will remain the same with girls on Saturday and boys on Sunday. Also, girls will still be permitted to play on boys teams.
- 5) All teams will play under current SJYS (SJGSL) rules of competition. However, the board is open to suggestions for changes which can be made as we move forward.
- 6) The league will initially operate under the current policies and procedures of the current SJGSL. The board plans to form a committee to evaluate our current rules, policies and procedures in order to build a best-in-breed set for subsequent seasons.
- 7) This will begin Fall 2021.
- 8) We will be extending an opportunity to join our board to select SJSL members who have shown dedication to the advancement of youth soccer in SJ, as they have valuable insight to add.
- 9) We will have board members dedicated to the boys teams as well as the girls team, all with one common goal - to make youth soccer better in SJ.
- 10) Now, finally, all soccer events will be held under one banner, SJYS. It will streamline the information going out to clubs, eliminate rule differences, and allow greater awareness and access to programs like SJ CUP and Select.
- 11) SJYS will also allow for simpler, more streamline scheduling corrections and updates, and ensure events are taken into account when creating a schedule.
- 12) As a unified league, SJYS, will have the ability to continue to push soccer in SJ and continue to innovate for the benefit of your players, coaches, parents, and volunteers. Ideas for future projects and ventures are always welcome.
- 13) Club passing will continue to be handled according to SJGSL rules, but the program is open to ideas for improvement.
- 14) There has been a very preliminary discussion of initiating coed teams at the older (U17-19) age groups. The thinking is that many clubs have older teams of each gender that age-out only because they did not have enough boy or girl players. Coed teams may allow for these players to continue playing, especially in the spring when they are without high school ball. These coed teams would be in addition to the standard boys and girls teams as currently exists.

We hope that this information is helpful and answers the questions that some of you may have had about this situation. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Thanks

Heather